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PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING

DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES

IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES SOUTH OF 60°

Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY		**iii**
PREFACE		**iv**
ACRONYMS		**v**
DEFINITION OF TERMS		**vi**
1	**INTRODUCTION**	**1**
1.1	Application of the Procedure	1
1.2	Formation of the Community-Based Water Team	2
2	**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES**	**3**
2.1	First Nations	3
2.2	Health Canada	4
2.3	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada	4
3	**PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES**	**5**
3.1	Option 1: Chief and Council address and lift a drinking water advisory within three to four days	5
3.2	Option 2: Chief and Council develop an Action Plan	5
3.3	Option 3: Chief and Council activate Community-Based Water Team to develop an Action Plan	6
3.4	Further Considerations	7
	Figure 1: Key Elements of the Process for Addressing a Drinking Water Advisory	8
4	**PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES SOUTH OF 60°**	**9**
APPENDIX 1:	**Template for an Action Plan**	10
APPENDIX 2:	**List of Community-Based Water Team Members**	12
APPENDIX 3:	**Available Resources**	15

The **Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°** is a living document and will be amended as necessary.

Please send your comments to DWAWG@hc-sc.gc.ca. All comments received will be considered in the revision of this document.

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Fax: (613) 941-5366
E-Mail: info@hc-sc.gc.ca

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°** (the Procedure) was developed by the Drinking Water Advisory Working Group. Led by Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, the Procedure was developed as a collaborative effort among members of Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and First Nations stakeholders.

The purpose of the Procedure is to provide guidance to Chief and Council and other involved stakeholders on how to efficiently address the underlying causes of a Drinking Water Advisory (DWA) after it has been issued. The Procedure describes a team approach to help Chief and Council coordinate efforts among all involved stakeholders to ensure that a DWA is lifted as quickly as possible. As some regional offices may already have an effective process in place, this Procedure is meant to reinforce, not replace, these processes and encourage communication among government departments and First Nations.

In order to facilitate communication among stakeholders following a DWA, the Procedure recommends the development of a Community-Based Water Team and identifies essential and additional members. The roles and responsibilities of involved stakeholders with respect to actions following the issuance of a DWA are summarized in this document. Three options that Chief and Council may follow to effectively address the DWA are also presented. In order to report on and confirm that remedial action has been taken to address the DWA, a template for an Action Plan is included in an appendix.

The Procedure is a living document to be amended as appropriate, incorporating feedback provided to the Drinking Water Advisory Working Group by users of the document.

PREFACE

To be effective, Drinking Water Advisories (DWAs) need to be fully understood by the community in which they are issued. A prolonged DWA can lose effectiveness over time and thus can become a threat to public health. The **Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°** (the Procedure) is meant to provide guidance to Chief and Council and other involved persons to efficiently address the underlying causes of a DWA after it has been issued.

Information regarding issuing and rescinding DWAs can be found in Health Canada's **Procedure Manual for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities South of 60°**. This document can be acquired from Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch regional offices.

The Procedure describes a team approach to help Chief and Council coordinate efforts among all involved stakeholders to ensure that a DWA is lifted as quickly as possible.

As each DWA deals first and foremost with the protection of public health, it is imperative that Chief and Council dedicate significant effort to addressing and removing the underlying causes of a DWA. However, in the event that the Chief is unavailable to take action steps to address a DWA, he/she may choose to appoint a designate.

This document was developed by the Drinking Water Advisory Working Group, a multistakeholder team composed of the following members:

First Nations

- Joe Francis (Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association of Ontario)
- Derrick Kamanga (Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation)

Health Canada

- Clara Bryna Heffernan (Headquarters)
- Jennifer Mercer (Headquarters)
- Peter Ross (Ontario Region)
- Skattar Sandhu (Alberta Region)
- Jacinthe A. Séguin (Headquarters)
- Kristina Taracha (Headquarters)
- Kelly Vandewint (Headquarters)
- Opel Vuzi (Alberta Region)

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

- David Atkins (Headquarters)
- Stephanie Crystal (Ontario Region)
- Tracey Hazelwood (Headquarters)
- Geoff Kendell (British Columbia Region)
- Ken MacDonald (British Columbia Region)
- Jim Steeves (Headquarters)
- Brian Wallace (Headquarters)

ACRONYMS

BWA Boil Water Advisory

BWO Boil Water Order

CBWT Community-Based Water Team

DNCA Do Not Consume Advisory

DNCO Do Not Consume Order

DNUA Do Not Use Advisory

DNUO Do Not Use Order

DWA Drinking Water Advisory

EHO Environmental Health Officer

GCDWQ **Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality**

HC Health Canada, or the appropriate provider of Environmental Health Services

INAC Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

DEFINITION OF TERMS

COMMUNITY-BASED DRINKING WATER QUALITY MONITOR – A Community-Based Drinking Water Quality Monitor carries out the Drinking Water Safety Program and is responsible for sampling drinking water within the community for bacteriological quality.

COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEM – Any water system that produces drinking water destined for human consumption and that serves five or more households or a public facility must comply with the requirements of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's **Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities**. Specifically, this protocol and its requirements apply to the following types of community drinking water systems:

- Small Community Systems – Small Community Systems are drinking water systems that serve between five and 100 private households or any public facilities/buildings, or both.
- Community Systems – Community Systems are drinking water systems that serve more than 100 private households or any public facilities/buildings, or both.
- Public Facilities – A Public Facility is a non-commercial facility that is owned or operated by the Crown or Chief and Council and serves a public function, such as a school, health clinic, band office, retirement or nursing home or daycare centre.
- Trucked Systems – Trucked Systems are drinking water systems that use tank trucks to deliver potable water to consumers.

DESIGNATE – In the event that the Chief is unavailable to take action steps to address a Drinking Water Advisory (DWA), he/she may choose to appoint a designate. The designate will be empowered to act on behalf of Chief and Council in the remediation process. As such, the designate must have access to all the necessary tools and data to address the DWA. The designate would assume all of the Chief and Council's responsibilities relating to DWAs and would act as the Community-Based Water Team (CBWT) leader.

DRINKING WATER ADVISORY – The term Drinking Water Advisory (DWA) is a blanket term to cover the following types of advisories to the public: Boil Water Advisory (BWA), Boil Water Order (BWO), Do Not Consume Order (DNCO), Do Not Consume Advisory (DNCA), Do Not Use Order (DNUO), and Do Not Use Advisory (DNUA):

- BOIL WATER ADVISORY – A Boil Water Advisory (BWA) is issued to the public when the water in a community's water system is contaminated with faecal pollution indicator organisms (such as **Escherichia coli**) or when water quality is questionable due to operational deficiencies (such as inadequate chlorine residual). Under these circumstances, bringing the water to a rolling boil for at least one minute will render it safe for human consumption
- BOIL WATER ORDER – A Boil Water Order (BWO) is issued to the public when the water in a community's water system is known or suspected of being responsible for an outbreak of infectious waterborne illness. Bringing water to a rolling boil for one minute will inactivate any disease-causing organisms that may be present and render it safe for human consumption.

- DO NOT CONSUME ORDER or DO NOT CONSUME ADVISORY – A Do Not Consume Order (DNCO) or a Do Not Consume Advisory (DNCA) is issued to the public when the water in a community's water system contains a contaminant, such as a chemical, that cannot be removed from the water by boiling.
- DO NOT USE ORDER or DO NOT USE ADVISORY – A Do Not Use Order (DNUO) or a Do Not Use Advisory (DNUA) is issued when the contaminant that poses a health risk cannot be removed from the water by boiling, and exposure to the water could cause skin, eye, and/or nose irritations. A Do Not Use Order (DNUO) or a Do Not Use Advisory (DNUA) is also issued when an unknown contaminant has polluted the drinking water supply (e.g. a chemical spill).

WATER SYSTEMS OPERATOR – A Water Systems Operator is a certified person who operates and maintains the equipment of a water treatment plant.

1 INTRODUCTION

To protect public health, it is important to address Drinking Water Advisories (DWAs) in the most efficient manner. The **Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°** (the Procedure) is a step-by-step guide intended for use by Chief and Council in addressing a DWA.

The purpose of the Procedure is to:

- outline a process for Chief and Council to follow after a DWA is issued to help address the underlying cause(s) of the DWA in a timely manner in order to protect public health;
- describe how to establish a Community-Based Water Team (CBWT) with potential stakeholders, if one does not already exist and/or is required;
- identify proactive activities (i.e. meetings and awareness training) that should be carried out in advance of a DWA being issued; and
- foster communication among relevant stakeholders to assist Chief and Council in:
  - identifying the cause(s) of the DWA;
  - developing an Action Plan to address the underlying cause(s) of the DWA; and
  - reporting on implementation of the Action Plan.

1.1 APPLICATION OF THE PROCEDURE

The Procedure applies to any water system that produces drinking water for human consumption that is funded in whole or in part by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and that serves five or more household connections or a public facility (as defined in INAC's **Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities**).

Although implementation of the Procedure may not be necessary for DWAs that can be addressed and lifted within three or four days, specific steps outlined in the Procedure may still be helpful. In such cases, confirmation of action taken to address the DWA should be submitted after the DWA has been lifted. To confirm that action has been taken, the template for an Action Plan (see Appendix 1) should be completed for every issuance of a DWA.

This document is meant to assist in the development of communication among stakeholders and to complement practices already in existence within the regions to deal with DWAs. It is not meant to be prescriptive; rather, it is intended to encourage proactive approaches to DWAs.

It is understood that the unique situation of each community will require an individualized approach to addressing DWAs. Owing to some differences in community practices, decisions on whether to create a CBWT, as well as decisions made by the team, may vary. Local relationships among stakeholders involved in addressing DWAs may differ among regions, and it is not suggested that working procedures within the regions necessarily be replaced by the steps described in this Procedure. The Procedure was developed as a guide for regions to adopt best management practices and thereby improve the effectiveness of their approach to addressing DWAs.

1.2 FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY-BASED WATER TEAM

Well before a DWA is issued, it is recommended that Chief and Council proactively identify the membership for a CBWT (with contact names provided by INAC and Health Canada [HC]) and maintain an up-to-date list of CBWT members (See Appendix 2).

A CBWT should consist, at a minimum, of:

- Chief (or Designate) (who shall serve as team leader);
- Circuit Rider Trainer (where available);
- Community-Based Drinking Water Quality Monitor;
- Community Health Director;
- Community Health Nurse;
- HC regional representative (such as an Environmental Health Officer [EHO]);
- INAC regional representatives (such as a Funding Officer and an Engineer);
- Tribal Council Engineer / a representative of a First Nations Technical Organization (where available); and
- Water Systems Operator and/or Water Delivery Truck Operator.

Chief and Council may wish to include additional members on the CBWT as required, including, but not limited to:

- Community Health Representative;
- Nurse in Charge; and
- Regional Medical Officer (RMO) or Medical Officer of Health.

As mentioned in Section 1.1, **Application of the Procedure**, it may not be necessary to form a CBWT if a similar group is already in existence and is working effectively.

2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES

Chief and Council are responsible for planning and developing their water systems, as well as the management of the operation and maintenance of the water systems.

The overall responsibility of Chief and Council in relation to DWAs is to work towards the timely and effective removal of the DWA. In the event that a designate has been appointed to act on behalf of Chief and Council, it should be ensured that the designate has access to the tools and data necessary to assume responsibilities relating to the DWA and will act as the CBWT leader.

In advance of a DWA event, Chief and Council ideally should have an updated contact list of appropriate team members ready to respond to DWAs.

The First Nations should regularly sample, as per INAC's **Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities**, the quality of drinking water produced by water systems within their community.

INAC provides funding for construction of new water systems and upgrades to existing water systems, as well as technical advice to assist in the development, implementation and monitoring of remedial measures.

HC assists in drinking water quality monitoring and recommends corrective measures if water sampling results are unsatisfactory or when the operation of the water system may compromise public health. HC provides First Nations with public health expertise through the Drinking Water Safety Program.

The CBWT is formed to aid Chief and Council in addressing DWAs.

Responsibilities during a DWA event are described below.

2.1 FIRST NATIONS

- Chief and Council will:
  - if necessary, activate the CBWT to assist in assessing the situation, develop corrective measures and implement the measures to rectify the deficiencies;
  - if necessary, provide to the designate administrative, management and communication tools and access to records and data;
  - ensure the development and implementation of the Action Plan to address the DWA in the most efficient manner (to be coordinated with the Emergency Response Plan as appropriate);
  - monitor the implementation of the corrective measures;
  - keep the community up to date on progress on remedial actions;
  - provide a copy of the Action Plan to regional HC and INAC representatives;
  - provide information on the water system operation and maintenance, including water quality monitoring results such as chlorine residuals, turbidity levels and pH;

- report on deficiencies associated with the operation of the water system that might have led to the issuance of the DWA;
- conduct additional tests to verify the effectiveness of remedial measures; and
- lift the DWA when remedial measures are successfully implemented and the water is safe for human consumption.

2.2 HEALTH CANADA

- Health Canada will be available to provide Chief and Council with:
  - advice on drinking water quality;
  - assistance in the development, implementation and monitoring of the effectiveness of remedial measures;
  - historical data on the water system and water quality to help determine the cause of the drinking water contamination that led to the DWA;
  - current and relevant monitoring and sampling data; and
  - advice to lift the DWA when the deficiencies have been corrected and the water is safe for human consumption.

2.3 INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA

- INAC provides advice, support and information on funding options to assist Chief and Council in developing, implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of remedial measures.
- Where public health and safety are at risk and the First Nations community is unable to address the issue, INAC has the authority, as set out in terms and conditions of funding agreements, to take action to remedy the situation.
- INAC provides technical advice to assist in the development, implementation and monitoring of remedial measures (where available, First Nations Technical Organizations and Circuit Rider Trainers may also provide technical advice).

3 PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES

This section outlines basic steps to be undertaken once a DWA is issued in First Nations communities. These steps are summarized in Figure 1.

In accordance with Health Canada's **Procedure Manual for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities South of 60°**, EHOs recommend to Chief and Council that they issue and lift Boil Water Advisories, Do Not Use Advisories and Do Not Consume Advisories. Boil Water Orders, Do Not Use Orders and Do Not Consume Orders are issued by the appropriate authority under the provincial **Public Health Act**.

Following the issuance of a DWA, Chief and Council have three options to choose from in order to address the DWA in the most efficient way. They may:

- develop a plan to address the DWA in three to four days, if the underlying cause of the DWA is simple (Option 1);
- develop an Action Plan and submit it to HC and INAC regional representatives for approval within two business days (Option 2); or
- activate the CBWT to develop an Action Plan and work towards its implementation (Option 3).

Should Chief and Council already have a multistakeholder team in place to address DWAs, it is not necessary for a separate CBWT to be formed.

3.1 OPTION 1: CHIEF AND COUNCIL ADDRESS AND LIFT DRINKING WATER ADVISORY WITHIN THREE TO FOUR DAYS

If the problem causing the DWA is relatively simple and it is possible to address and lift the DWA within three to four days, Chief and Council are encouraged to take immediate action to address the DWA. In this situation, Chief and Council should use the template for an Action Plan (see Appendix 1) to confirm that remedial action is complete, water is safe for human consumption and the DWA is lifted. Once completed, the Action Plan template should be submitted to HC and INAC regional offices for information purposes.

3.2 OPTION 2: CHIEF AND COUNCIL DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Chief and Council should develop an Action Plan to deal with the DWA and submit the Action Plan to INAC and HC regional offices within two business days of the issuance of a DWA.

Depending on the complexity of the situation, Chief and Council may require more time to complete the Action Plan. Should Chief and Council require more than two business days to complete the Action Plan, INAC and HC should be notified of the expected delay.

The Action Plan will be reviewed by INAC and HC regional offices within two business days. In more complex situations (such as the proposal of a new plant, new source, etc.), INAC may require more time to review the Action Plan. In such situations, INAC will contact Chief and Council to notify them of the delay. Once the Action Plan has been reviewed, INAC (following consultation with HC) will contact Chief and Council with the results of the review.

Also, it should be stated that in complex situations, any major commitments will have to be confirmed with INAC.

If the Action Plan is considered to be complete, its immediate implementation will be recommended.

Should the technical review determine that a more complete Action Plan is required, INAC and HC regional representatives will jointly contact Chief and Council to inform them of the results of the technical review and recommend that the CBWT be formed to assist in the completion of the Action Plan.

The Chief (or Designate) should activate and chair the CBWT as soon as possible.

Once activated, the CBWT should immediately convene (on-site or via teleconference) to help Chief and Council complete the Action Plan. The CBWT may need to convene on a regular basis during remediation steps.

Upon completion and self-approval of the Action Plan by the CBWT (including INAC and HC regional representatives), Chief and Council, with support from team members, will begin implementing the Action Plan to resolve the DWA issue.

After all remedial measures are implemented, the EHO will sample the water. During a DWA, water sampling should be determined based on site specific circumstances. Once sampling and testing confirm, as per the **Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality** (GCDWQ), that the water supply is potable, the EHO will recommend to Chief and Council verbally and in writing that the DWA be lifted.

3.3 OPTION 3: CHIEF AND COUNCIL ACTIVATE COMMUNITY-BASED WATER TEAM TO DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

In this option, the Chief (or Designate) immediately activates and chairs the CBWT. Once activated, the team should immediately convene (on-site or via teleconference) to assist Chief and Council in the development of an Action Plan. The CBWT may need to convene on a regular basis for planning and remediation steps.

Upon completion and self-approval of the Action Plan by the CBWT (including INAC and HC regional representatives), Chief and Council, with support from team members, will begin implementing the Action Plan to resolve the DWA issue.

In more complex situations (such as the proposal of a new plant, new source, etc.), INAC may require more time to review the Action Plan. In such situations, INAC will contact Chief and Council to notify them of the delay.

After all remedial measures are implemented, the EHO will sample the water. During a DWA, water sampling should be determined based on site specific circumstances. Once sampling and testing confirm, as per the GCDWQ, that the water supply is potable, the EHO will recommend to Chief and Council verbally and in writing that the DWA be lifted.

3.4 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

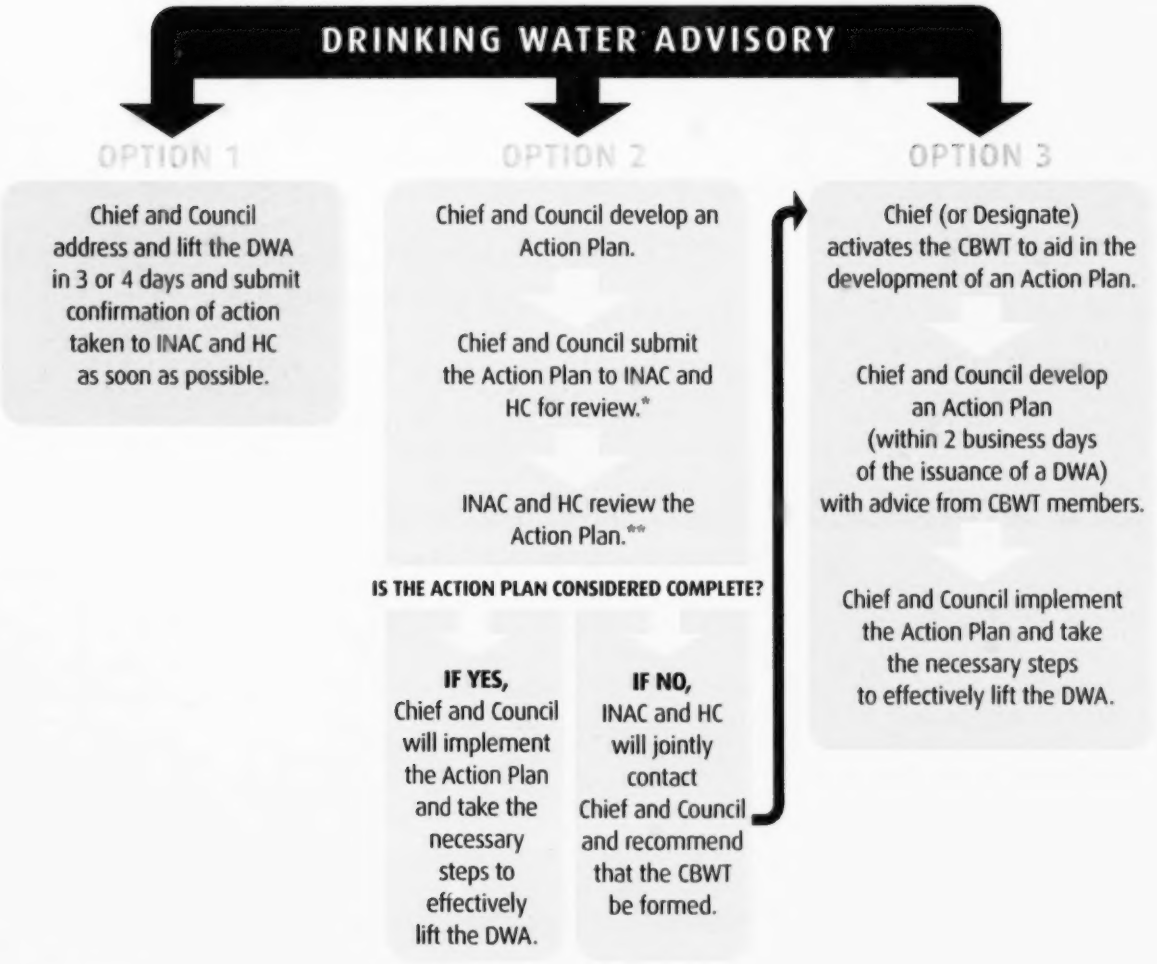
Chief and Council may wish to convene follow-up meeting(s) to discuss lessons learned and steps required to reduce the number of future DWAs and to be better prepared should another advisory be issued.

Where public health and safety are at risk and the First Nations community is unable to address the issue, INAC has the authority, as set out in terms and conditions of funding agreements, to take action to remedy the situation.

HC and INAC regional representatives on the CBWT will provide to their supervisors regular updates and an estimated date when the DWA is expected to be lifted. HC and INAC regional representatives will also enter the Action Plan updates into their databases.

It should be noted that upon the issuance of a Do Not Consume Order (DNCO) or a Do Not Use Order (DNUO), an alternative potable water source (e.g. bottled water) should be made available by Chief and Council to community members as a temporary solution while other alternatives are being explored.

FIGURE 1: KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING A DRINKING WATER ADVISORY


DRINKING WATER ADVISORY
OPTION 1
OPTION 2
OPTION 3
Chief and Council address and lift the DWA in 3 or 4 days and submit confirmation of action taken to INAC and HC as soon as possible.
Chief and Council develop an Action Plan.
Chief and Council submit the Action Plan to INAC and HC for review.*
INAC and HC review the Action Plan.**
IS THE ACTION PLAN CONSIDERED COMPLETE?
IF YES, Chief and Council will implement the Action Plan and take the necessary steps to effectively lift the DWA.
IF NO, INAC and HC will jointly contact Chief and Council and recommend that the CBWT be formed.
Chief (or Designate) activates the CBWT to aid in the development of an Action Plan.
Chief and Council develop an Action Plan (within 2 business days of the issuance of a DWA) with advice from CBWT members.
Chief and Council implement the Action Plan and take the necessary steps to effectively lift the DWA.

Special Notes:

* An Action Plan should be developed and submitted for review within two business days of the issuance of a DWA. Should Chief and Council require more than two business days to complete the Action Plan, INAC and HC should be notified of the expected delay.

** INAC and HC should review the action plan within two business days. In more complex situations (such as the proposal of a new plant, new source, etc.), INAC may require more time to review the Action Plan. In situations such as these, INAC will contact Chief and Council to notify them of the delay.

4 PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES SOUTH OF 60°

When necessary, the Drinking Water Advisory Working Group will update the **Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°** annually to reflect changes in policy or regulation and to incorporate comments received.

The latest updated version of this document will be available on Health Canada's Web site (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnih-spni/pubs/promotion_e.html)

APPENDIX 1: TEMPLATE FOR AN ACTION PLAN

DRINKING WATER ADVISORY ACTION PLAN

Community Name:

Band Name: Band #:

Water Source:

Drinking Water Advisory Type: _ BWA _ BWO _ DNCO /DNCA _ DNUO/DNUA

Date Issued:

Reason (s) for Drinking Water Advisory:

Action Taken to Date:

Action	Date

Further Action Proposed:

Short-term Action	Estimated Cost and Date of Completion
Long-term Action	Estimated Cost and Date of Completion

Persons Involved in Development of Action Plan:

Is DWA Resolved? _ Yes Date Resolved: _____

_ No

If not, please explain:

Prepared by: Print name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

E-mail: _____

Tel. _____

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF COMMUNITY-BASED WATER TEAM MEMBERS

Essential Members	Contact Information
Circuit Rider Trainer (where available)	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
Community-Based Drinking Water Quality Monitor	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
Community Health Director	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
Community Health Nurse	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:

Essential Members	Contact Information
HC regional representative, or appropriate provider of Environmental Health Services	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
INAC regional representative	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
Tribal Council Engineer (where available)	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
Water Systems Operator and/or Water Delivery Truck Operator	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:

Additional Members	Contact Information
Community Health Representative	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
Nurse in Charge	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:
Regional Medical Officer (RMO) or Medical Officer of Health	Name: Tel.: Fax: E-mail:

APPENDIX 3: AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Health Canada. 2004. **Procedure Manual for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities South of 60°** [can be acquired from First Nations and Inuit Health Branch regional offices].

Health Canada. 2006. **Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality — Summary Table**. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/doc_sup-appui/sum_guide-res_recom/index_e.html

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. 2006. **Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities.** http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/H2O/sdw/index_e.html